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Using conjoint analysis to examine academic members' course preferences for educational administration, supervision, planning and economics master's program

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Abstract

In many countries, university-based educational administration programs proceed to establish standardized curriculum contents for program approval in the international arena. An important influence on these efforts has been international benchmarking and quality assurance works. To a lesser extent, however, they have attached a special emphasis on personal preferences of "providers and clients", i.e., academic members and students. In the current research, it was proposed to determine if there is a connection between course preferences of academic members in the field of Educational Administration, Supervision, Planning and Economics (EASPE) and the current course lists of EASPE master's programs provided by Turkish universities and academic institutions. The methodology employed in this research was three-level embedded mixed research methodology that included respectively descriptive document analysis of course lists of 34 EASPE master's programs, quantitative conjoint analysis of course preferences of 13 academics from 13 universities and qualitative interview analysis. The research showed that total quality management, educational law and statistics courses were under discussion in terms of their partial utility estimates and scholar reviews. Academic members drew attention to need for qualified scholars with knowledge of statistics. Besides, there occurred the most reversals on the subject of interdisciplinary course theme. As a conclusion, article discussed the consequence that some course themes and titles taught in Turkish EASPE programs were inconsistent with academics' preferences.

Keywords: Academics' perspective, master's programs, major course themes, course titles, conjoint analysis;

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1. INTRODUCTION

Educational Administration, Supervision, Planning and Economics (EASPE) master's programs are offered in vary of universities as leadership or principal preparation program so that teachers and school principals keep abreast of developing field of school development and administration practices. Czubaj (2001) revealed that not only admission to these programs but also their syllabuses and course contents differ from one university to another.

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By intercultural aspect, Slater et al. (2003) handled the issue from the perspective of students. In doing so, they explained the diversity of preparation programs in terms of students' cultural backgrounds and expectations. Also, Banoğlu (2011)'s research results stressed that even EASPE course titles were in relation with the national priorities related to peculiar school administration practices.

The question as to whether preparation programs should be aligned with market requirement, as demanded in competitive global environment have been under discussion by the scholars for the last decade throughout the world. In line with this argument, Kanpinit (2008) and Papa (2011) asserted that technology leadership adequacy and quality management course titles came up as widespread contemporary topics in this sense. On the other hand, some other scholars drew attention to another educational agenda that covers social conflicts and problems in schools, based on diversity management, participative management and gender equality titles (Blackmore, 2005; Nieto, 2000). In this respect, the need to tailor contemporary master curriculum, which is aligned with the global perspectives, social challenges as well as national agenda, became important. Hence, Anderson and Grinberg (1998) questioned why some discourses have prevailed over others in the field of EASPE in due course. Correspondingly, Author (2011) addressed university syllabuses represent the prevailing approach in the intersection of global tendencies and national education policy. Nonetheless the knowledge and information concepts, transmitted and shaped usually by national and local organizations, are influential in the development of global economy, in turn, global structure shapes the nature of educational institutions (Carnoy, 2000).

A globalized economy promotes educational institutions to provide learners with more qualified and accredited curriculum in research activities and master's program qualifications (Kanpinit, 2008). Seeing that during 20th century, bureaucratization of educational organizations brought up further specialized professional knowledge, accordingly the academic theories on school administration tended to provide principals with advanced learning tools (Berry & Beach, 2009). Therefore, the systematic evaluation studies of EASPE programs were initiated to establish some standards on the national and international basis so that educational researcher gained insight into those in different universities. More precisely, these researches led to seek alignment between the academic curriculums (Glass, 1998).

To illustrate this alignment, Taskforce on Evaluating Leadership Preparation Programs suggested three goals conducive to the need of evaluation in USA. These goals are listed such as developing research designs, methods and instruments that can be performed in institutions; conducting comparative evaluation based on their impact on participants and K-12 schools; promoting self-reflection in the study of students regarding their programs' effectiveness and impact (Orr et al., 2009). Şimşek (2004) claimed that the qualification of EASPE master's programs should be confirmed by local or central educational organizations regarding their performance and accreditation. Cibulka (2009) similarly pointed out that state's regulatory framework that has a complementary function to manage licensure is one of main developments in preparation programs.

In essence, there is an emerging consensus that the ministry of education and universities ought to get into collaboration for construction of standard-based EASPE programs. As Hoyle (2003, 12) quoted Joe Murphy, who is coauthor of the well-known ISLLC standards, that "we should fall on a collective swords and end our lives of failure". However, there still remain some tough questions about how those would be determined and by whom. On the one part, market structure provides incentives for university-based standards under the competitive pressure of other university programs. For that reason, a great number of universities embark on self-evaluation for assessing their own level of competitiveness (Glasman et al., 2002). On the other part, Hackman and Alsbury (2005, 38) justifiably asserts the collected data for self-evaluation are "limited in that they relate to only individuals'

perceptions, rather than addressing a program's efficacy in ensuring that students have attained program goals and have internalized essential content knowledge and skills”.

At this point, Levine's (2005) prominent research report initiated a scholarly meaningful dispute on self-evaluation process. This report manifested EASPE programs have irrelevant curriculum that is out of touch with today's principals' needs. Furthermore, according to the same report, only 63 percent of principals found EASPE programs valuable. Afterwards, Jacobson (2005) promptly raised a question if Levine desired to change schools of education, why did not he start doing so with his own school at first as a president of that institution? Indeed, Levine (2005) already stated that simply because the president of institution has an idea about curriculum does not mean the faculty are going to adopt it. In that case, the burning question comes to mind that whether faculty preference really determines the present curriculum of EASPE programs or not?

Related literature showed that the arguments about the standardization of master programs vary. The reviews about standardization process is not only restricted with “how to” matter but also a storm was brewing over “by whom” question. Some academicians alleged accreditation process as “external demands” (Cambron-McCabe, 2003), even some others philosophically gave harsh criticism on standardization trends, since those would amount to acknowledge policing function of non-university (English, 2003). According to English, such regulation efforts can emerge “deeply detrimental” results by justifying Foucauldian “regime of truth” concept in educational policy. In the light of Adorno's aesthetic theory, Samier (2008) takes up the problem in that EASPE programs reinforces standardization, replicability and mediocrity by creating a mass appeal for marketing. These critics opened up for discussion whether EASPE programs should target at holding onto market share (Flessa, 2007); albeit, by far that led universities to “produce more degrees faster, easier and more cheaply” (Levine, 2005, 24).

Much as EASPE curriculum covers a broad range of leadership and management skills on the practical base, nevertheless it has an abstract core built upon researchers' systemically working on what they manufactured in theoretical base (Thompson, 2001). Therefore, it is fruitless to examine university curriculum irrespective of academicians' scholarly productions that reflect their individual approaches. In other words, educational curricula are related to feedbacks from faculty together with the prevailing theoretical and practical tendencies on the world. Hence, it is my position that we should take academic members' constructive criticism on educational policy and EASPE programs. As Hoyle (2004) underlined we need more perception research that can provide valuable data for monitoring EASPE programs' success and weakness.

English (2003) revealed that when official standards began to refer to legitimate authority, it is inevitable to discuss on whether the authority is justified by both of ruler and ruled components so that all participants are willing to obey rational-authority. That is to say, academicians' reviews gain importance to be able to compare the desired postgraduate courses with the current university syllabuses. Besides, their preferences and evaluations for master's programs would give insight into the effectiveness of postgraduate education. In turn, these preference-compatible programs would make a contribution to academic members' performance, sure thing, if we attach importance to diversity of views and conceptualize the efficiency as teleology rather than its own end.

As it was revealed in the studies above, the structure and the content of EASPE programs serve as an important means to train future school leaders. Unfortunately, academic structuring at the faculties does not allow academics a room to manuevre. There is scarcity of qualitative and quantitative evidence as to whether present programs meet the expectations of the schools. As well, none of the studies revealed the views of academics, who have spent their careers teaching in EASPE programs. The current reserach deliberately focused on the conformity of Turkish EASPE master's programs with EASPE academic members' preferences and views with the hope that these views could contribute to the

development of EASPE programs. So this unique study argues that educational administration and leadership programs could be developed through the views of academics, who have been teaching in these programs.

The study sought answers to the sub research questions below:

- Do the current course titles offered in the course lists of EASPE master's programs comply with EASPE academic members' preferences?
- If not, how would the academic members interpret this situation?

2. METHOD

The mixed research methodology was applied in this study because it permits to carry out an integrative investigation of phenomena from multiple angles (Eacott, 2008). Three level embedded research design was constructed by using qualitative and quantitative procedures. The major concern of mix type research methodology is to secure dialectic interactions between qualitative and quantitative techniques, but not merely use of one method after another in a chain (Johnson, 2008). To that end, the current research paid strict attention to employ appropriate techniques in both data collection and analyses. Thereby, each step cohesively followed another one and determined the next research technique, respectively from qualitative document analysis to quantitative conjoint analysis and from this point again to qualitative interview technique.

At first step, a total 134 Turkish universities were scanned to verify the existence of EASPE master's programs through their relevant department websites and thereby 34 programs were detected with their course lists. Afterwards, each syllabus was examined to extract meaningful keywords from course titles. In the matching process while determining keywords, course titles were analyzed to generate a keyword pool. Subsequently, the concerned keywords were categorized into six major themes and tabulated by the most, the least and, in some cases, the moderate prevalence of keywords. As a result of first level, by qualitative document analysis of 34 course lists, 6 major course themes (course group) and 18 keywords (course titles) were created to form a sample course list. Table 1 shows these themes and keywords by their frequencies and total credits.

Table 1: Course Themes and Keywords

<i>Course Groups</i>	<i>Course Titles</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>Total Credits</i>
Research Statistics	Statistics in Education	19	60
	Advanced Statistics	2	6
Research Methods	Educational Research Methods	27	98
	Qualitative Research Methods	4	12
Leadership	Leadership in Educational Organizations	7	24
	Instructional Leadership	2	6
Curriculum	Curriculum Development	5	15
	Curriculum Evaluation	2	6
	Curriculum Design & Management	1	3
Management	Human Resource Management	15	45
	Change Management	4	12
	Conflict Management	3	9

Supervision	Contemporary Educational Supervision	6	18
	Educational Law	6	17
	Inspection Techniques	1	4
Interdisciplinary	Total Quality Management	8	24
	Educational Philosophy	5	15
	Organizational Learning	3	9

These frequencies allowed to proceed to the second step that purpose to investigate faculty preferences by using conjoint analysis. Conjoint analysis basically means conducting particular experiment among participants in order to model their decision making process (Kotri, 2006). For this purpose, full-profile data collection technique was performed to generate sample course lists, named profile cards. Thus, 16 different kinds of profile cards was designed in a way that each card consists of a total of 7 course titles and each course title represents only one course group.

The basic two steps in designing conjoint analysis can be summarized as follows: developing the set of relevant attributes and attribute levels, as they had been generated at first step above, and collecting preferences of participants. Since the number of all possible attributes and attribute levels grows rapidly, conjoint analysts make use of orthogonal that systematically reduce the number of stimuli (Bau et al., 2005). By this means, 16 profile cards were prepared in orthogonal design by SPSS software. The course groups were coded as attributes and the titles as attribute levels.

2.1. Sampling Method

Having generated data collection cards (profile cards), maximum variation sampling was employed to select participants of the study as a purposive sampling method. From previously detected 34 Turkish universities, whose either social science or educational institution offers EASPE master's program, 17 universities and 17 scholars were involved in the research sample. While determining universities, author paid attention to select each university from different city. In due course, 4 scholars politely declined to participate in this study and wherefore the data were collected from 13 scholars who hold academic appointments at the rank of assistant professor, associate professor or professor in 13 distinctive universities. A total of 13 universities represent 41 % of the universities offering master's degree in the field of EASPE. The academic degree distribution of participants was of 6 professors, 1 associate professor and 6 assistant professors. These academic institutions in which participants work were Gazi University, Ege University, Marmara University, Anadolu University, Osmangazi University, Turkish and Middle Eastern Institute for Public Administration (TODAİ), Adnan Menderes University, Uludağ University, Middle East Technical University, Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, Bahçeşehir University, Kastamonu University and Haliç University.

2.2. Data Collection

During the 5th NEAC (5th National Educational Administration Congress) held in Antalya on 1-2 May 2010, conjoint data were collected from the selected 17 scholars in accordance with the sampling plan. They were asked to make a trade-off among profile cards that each one represents alternative course list. Namely, trade-off analysis was conducted through conjoint profile cards so as to determine scholars' choice of alternatively favorite master's program syllabuses, rather than taking their comments on individual course groups and titles. Traditional survey method asks participants how much value they place on each course title, while conjoint analysis facilitate us to have a comprehensive look on participants' preferences when taken different attributes together. Therefore, collected choices allow computing the relative importance scores of attributes and partial utilities of attribute levels.

At last step, the obtained estimates of partial utility and relative importance gave a rise to deepen the research with the qualitative data collection techniques such as face-to-face interview and email interviewing. To that end, various open-end questions and probes were prepared in semi-structured way. In reality, these were properly designed so that scholars were acquainted with their own conjoint analysis results. In order to conduct interviews in a convenient place and comfortable atmosphere for academicians, they were carried out throughout the national educational administration congress, namely in the 6th NEAC that held in North Cyprus on 16-17 April 2011. From the list of those who had participated in the first interview, 4 scholars unfortunately did not take part in the 6th NEAC (6th National Educational Administration Congress). So author invited them to interview about their conjoint results by email. Of those, 3 scholars replied in affirmative and the individual semi-structured questions were delivered to them by email and their feedbacks were taken into account by the same way.

2.3. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using SPSS 17.0 syntax. The observed preferences were entered as sequence data (i.e. each participant is asked to order the profile cards from the most to the least preferred). Attributes were modeled as linear less, or rather, their partial utility functions were assumed to be decreased linear. Accordingly, attribute levels were placed into conjoint plan file by the frequency rank. After the detection of reversal attributes and subjects, the linear model was changed into discrete model for all attributes and individual interview questions were prepared according to discrete model's results.

2.4. Limitations

There are several limitations in this research. First, participants were limited to scholars who participated in NEAC organizations. Second, four participants were interviewed during a conference break time lasting 20 minutes. It is possible that participants might have felt themselves under the pressure of short length of interview. Third, three participants answered the interview questions by email. Accordingly, author did not have opportunity to make an interactive communication with these participants.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Academics' Course Preferences

The validity of the observations was estimated using Pearson correlation and Kendall's tau coefficients. The first linear less model accounted for 83.7 % of the variance between observed and estimated preferences ($r = .915$, $p < .001$; $\tau = .728$, $p < .001$), the second discrete model explained 92.7 % of that ($r = .963$, $p < .001$; $\tau = .812$, $p < .001$). After that, the reversal course attributes and subjects were investigated to elicit the preference gap for course titles.

At Table 2, it was demonstrated to what extent each attribute level contributes to the total utility of course attributes together with reversal subjects. Besides, it demonstrated the relative importance percentages of six attributes.

Table 2: Linear / Discrete Utility and Importance Values

<i>Course Groups (Attributes)</i>	<i>Course Titles (Attribute Levels)</i>	<i>Partial Utility (Linear Model)</i>	<i>Partial Utility (Discrete Model)</i>	<i>Importance Value (Linear Model)</i>	<i>Importance Value (Discrete Model)</i>	<i>Number of Reversals</i>
Research Statistics	Statistics in Education	-3.058	1.529	20.494	16.379	2 participants (15%) No: 7-8
	Advanced Statistics	-6.115	-1.529			
Research Methods	Educational Research Methods	-.462	.231	11.547	8.911	5 participants (38%) No: 4-5-6-7-10
	Qualitative Research Methods	-.923	-.231			
Leadership	Educational Leadership	-1.019	.510	8.644	7.143	3 participants (23%) No: 3-6-12
	Instructional Leadership	-2.038	-.510			
Curriculum	Introduction to Curriculum Development	-.566	.808	14.788	13.792	4 participants (31%) No: 3-7-8-13
	Curriculum Evaluation	-1.133	-.663			
	Curriculum Design & Management	-1.699	-.144			
Management	Human Resource Management	.021	-.141	10.719	11.722	5 participants (38%) No: 1-2-6-8-9
	Change Management	.042	.330			
	Conflict Management	.063	-.189			
Supervision	Contemporary Educational Supervision	-.105	.179	11.515	21.359	4 participants (31%) No: 1-2-4-8
	Educational Law	-.210	-.205			
	Inspection Techniques	-.315	.026			
Interdisciplinary	Total Quality Management (TQM)	1.210	-1.449	22.294	20.694	9 participants (69%) No: 1-2-3-4-5-7-8-9-13
	Educational Philosophy	2.420	.657			
	Organizational Learning	3.369	.792			
(Constant)		14.329	8.651			

Partial utility values allow the computation of the total utility for all incentives. Those can be added up to find total utility of any attribute combination along with the constant term as a base value. Taking the utility range for each attribute and dividing by the sum of the utility ranges for all attributes compute relative importance percentages. As seen in Table 1, the first point to be noticed is that partial utility estimates of the linear model (the third column) could yield absolutely negative coefficients because of the linear model's assumption. However, management and interdisciplinary attributes indicated some positive scores in contrast to the assumption. The next column, namely discrete model, is more distinctive to compare course titles according to their partial utility scores. Once more the linear model's assumption of those participants would prefer the more frequent course titles to less frequent ones was violated substantially by "interdisciplinary approach", slightly by "management" and "supervision" course groups. Also, it was found that TQM course title has a negative influence (i.e. 1.210) on academicians' preferences. On one hand, for interdisciplinary attribute, reversal subjects reached 9 participants (69%), whereas those were confined to only 5 participants for management attribute (38%) and 4 participants for supervision attribute (31%). For "management" attribute, such a small amount of partial utility was negligible to evaluate (i.e., .021). Compared to those in linear model, "research statistics" attribute level produced the highest importance value with 20.5%, because scholars chiefly preferred "statistics in education" attribute level to "advanced statistics" one.

After linear model had concluded reversal subjects, the remained analyses were conducted with the discrete model. The results showed that the course preference of academic members in the field of EASPE was most influenced rankly by "supervision" (21.6 %), "interdisciplinary approach" (20.7 %), "research statistics" (16.4 %), "curriculum" (13.8 %), "management" (11.7 %), "research methods" (8.9 %) and "leadership" (7.1%). Given "supervision" attribute, the most preferred attribute level was "contemporary educational supervision", while the least preferred one was "educational law" with the utility change of .384. Regarding "interdisciplinary" attribute, the desirability difference between the most preferred level (organizational learning) and the least preferred level (TQM) yielded a great utility change of 2.241. In "research statistics" attribute, "advanced statistics" attribute level was the least preferred one with its partial utility value of -1.529.

3.2. Academics' Views on the EASPE Courses

In addition to general characteristics of scholar preferences presented in Table 1, Figure 1 presented below shows the participants' individual importance values all in one graphic.

Figure 1: Individual Importance Scores

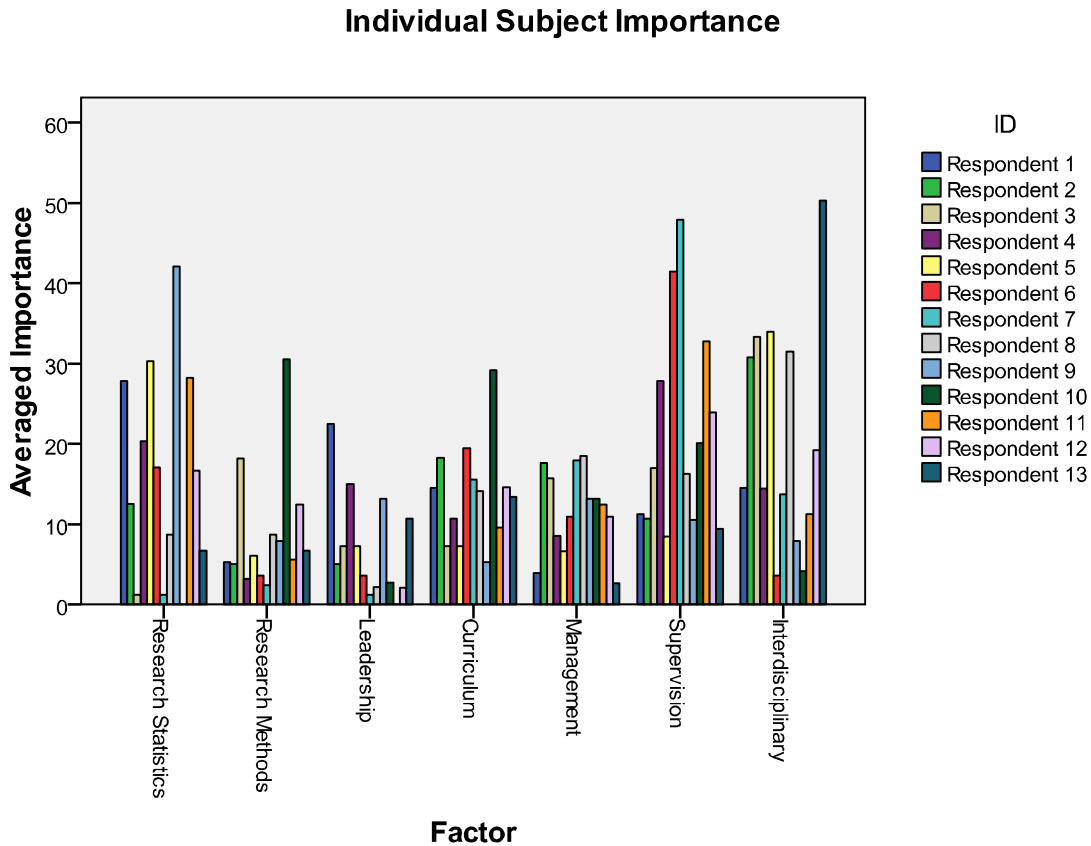


Figure 1. Each attribute covers 13 individual relative importance scores that allow us to notice distinct scholars whose preferences are either substantially or slightly affected by these factors.

Of 13 participants, participant-9's preference played a major part for "research statistics" attribute. "Statistics in education" course title was ranked first. She manifested in the interview that these courses are rather essential to promote students to make research studies by themselves.

"With the exception of theoretical research, all other research and dissertation designs entail the knowledge of statistics somehow. Not only it is essential course for students but also scholars make use of that to make estimates for their own research studies. In conjunction with computer-based statistical software packages, however, analytical and evaluation errors mounted up in recent years. I attribute this flaw to the lack of consultation with educational statisticians. In some cases, even if we study together with some statisticians and yet we do it with ones who are experts in mathematical statistics much more than educational statistics."

Subsequently, participant-9 evaluated the EASPE master's program offered in her own university. She touched the core and selective course diversity at syllabuses.

"As regard as I consider the EASPE program and other educational programs in my university, 'educational research' and 'educational statistics' courses are offered unfortunately as selective courses for our master's degree students but 'research in social sciences' as core course. Under these

circumstances, we strive to encourage our students to take these selective course, however still there is nothing left to do in case selective course time does not match with some students' general course schedule or students might be reluctant to take these selective ones."

Participant-11 underlined that statistics course group should be enriched with "advanced statistics" course in addition to present basic statistics course. He illustrated the situation by giving his past experiences regarding statistics courses and put into words how gradually educational administration field is evolved into the need of advanced statistics.

"Sure thing, the master's degree syllabuses should encompass the advanced statistics course. In this day and age, students should not have got a master degree without previously mastering advanced statistics. At the time when I was studying for my master degree, it was not such a fundamental requirement within the academic community. My master's thesis was such that I had completed it by using solely percentage and frequency techniques. But today, this is unacceptable situation even for conference papers. "

As for the course titles listed in leadership course group, participant-1 showed the highest incidence of preference for "educational leadership" course title. The following comment coming from the relevant participant explained his interest to leadership courses.

"Educational leadership encompasses a large field of leadership functions, while instructional leadership is just a little part of it. I prefer to focus on particularly Hallinger and Murphy's (1985) three dimensional instructional leadership model and eleven sub-dimensions in my lectures. Hence, their approach sounds my ideas as general."

For curriculum course group, due to fact that participant-10 kindly refused to join interviews, author interviewed about curriculum attribute with participant-6. She put emphasis on the benefits of interdisciplinary interests other than EASPE field. Participant 6 underlined a hidden problem encountered at many university programs, which is allocating the quality academic personel for the appropriate courses. She reflects this constraints with the following words.

"Although I consider important to study in minor fields of educational administration, nevertheless if you ask me whether I diversified my interest on different subjects in the field, it is still questionable. For my preference of curriculum development, I believe that having special areas of interest exerts a strong influence on academic members' choice, so did my preference. I ranked first this curriculum courses because I teach them in my university due to the lack of qualified personnel."

Almost half the participants indicated the importance of incorporating interdisciplinary courses in EASPE courses (6/13). However most of them also criticised the way how it was neglected at the program structures. This study showed that academics attach importance to provide students with a platform where they could look from an interdisciplinary perspective. In line with this idea, Klotz and Whiting (1998) suggested a cohort teaching block including professors from EASPE and Curriculum and Instruction departments. This suggestion is still valid and works for provision of qualified personnel in the curriculum and instruction field. Correspondingly, another scholar, participant-4 asserted the need of qualified personnel for statistics courses. Her reflection echoed other three participants' similar views in the study.

"In my university, statistics courses are not taught efficiently since we lack scholars who are experts in statistics. Finding a competent scholar is one of our many challenges and this also effects the quality of the program. So we are in need of well-qualified academics, whose main expert area is statistics."

These lines above remind of other critics over the quality of EASPE research, e.g. some scholars argued that EASPE dissertations and scholarly articles were merely limited to basic level statistical

techniques (Balci, 2008; Karadağ, 2010). Yet, the current results showed that performing further statistical techniques depends on meeting the needs of statistically qualified academic members at the outset.

For management course group, participants' preferences appear to be similar to each other in terms of the relative importance percentages though some participants preferred reversely "change management" to "human resource management" (HRM). Regarding management course category, participant-11 emphasized the importance of strategic management in the interview.

"The data-driven management is among the indispensable management approaches and thereby strategic management gained importance for EASPE programs. In that sense, EASPE curriculum acquired a new dimension and so HRM distinguished from "personal management" field. Any more, there is no return for our field."

As Eacott (2008) asserted strategic management is still in its infancy stage and it deserves greater attention. On this basis, participant-11 referred to critical point for management courses. After participant-11 put ahead HRM as a new dimension for EASPE, also participant-12 laid a special stress on human relations.

"Among all management course titles, making a comparison is not accurately possible. For me, each of them has special importance, but still I believe that human relationship should be placed at the core of every kind of management course."

Rost (1980) had reported that out of 174 departments of EASPE, 96 (55%) were offering a course in human relations training in Canada. Twenty-eight years later and from hundreds of kilometers away, Üstüner and Cömert (2008) reported that the most popular master's course taught with the highest frequency still was "human resource management" courses in Turkey. It signifies the appealing power of human-based management paradigm beyond the time and borders. Participant-12 continued to state her views, but this time with a slight criticism of national education system, about sustainability of HRM on the practical base:

"Unfortunately, schools are not entitled to hire employees and principals have no authority to recruit. Under these circumstances, HRM does not comply with the education system being. Of course, HRM can not be blamed for the given conditions but it is certain there is a challenge to face somehow."

When she was asked to state her opinion about "change management" attribute level, participant-12 described it as a strong point against "status quo".

"On no account should we apply dogmatical attitude to our courses because it is not applicable. I observe that we strive to stay up to date and thereby change management makes its mark on course lists. If you are in seek of actual knowledge, circumstances back you up. Change management establish a strong argument in the face of dogmatism and I am proud of it."

It deserves to give a special attention that supervision attribute yielded a great difference between linear and discrete models' relative importance percentages. While the linear model got only 11.25 %, whereas the discrete model almost doubled the relative importance score to 21.36 %. That is to say, reversal preferences exerted greater influence on the total importance percentages and thereby author turned his steps towards the reversal preferences. Of those participants, participant-4 explained her idea about supervision, by unwittingly referring to natural limitation of full-profile method that impede equal preference for all attribute levels:

"No doubt, contemporary educational supervision has a great importance as a core course in syllabuses. However educational law and inspection techniques courses also must be incorporated into

curriculum as selective courses for master's degree. They represent a set of three cohesive courses so I did not put forward one of them more than others. "

It can be interpreted that she desires supervision-based curriculum combining all three course titles. However, participant-11 particularly highlighted "educational law" course title in the interviews, even his previous conjoint results do not correspond to his follow-up interpretations. He addressed his position for supervision course group.

"If someone who holds a master's degree on educational administration can not master educational law subject, how would he/she realize his supervision function as an expert on the theoretical and practical base? Without being conscious of individual rights in educational organizations, there is no point to get any degree on EASPE."

Participant-12 clarified why she had to prefer "educational law" course title less than others, so her consideration provided critical insight into present course lengths and schedules.

"Indeed, I do regard educational law course as valuable but also we should bear in mind that we are confined to limited credits at master's degree and even PhD programs. While making my choice, I noticed that the burden of inadequate credits compelled me to prefer more basic course like contemporary educational supervision to more complex one like educational law. This problem was overcome by extending the semester times abroad. For example course periods vary from 3 months to 1 year. Also we should increase the number of courses by rescheduling course periods and preparation level course programs."

At last but not least, interview process shifted its focus to rather controversial topic such as interdisciplinary theme. As a matter of fact, even before beginning to interview with participants, the number of reversal participants (n=9, 69%) had connoted the existence of inconsistency between the present university syllabuses and scholars's preferences of interdisciplinary field. To keep in mind, Table 2 demonstrates that TQM attribute level is the least preferred course title by scholars, in contrast to its prevalence observed in syllabuses.

Therefore, author initially interviewed with the scholar who obtained the highest relative importance percentage for interdisciplinary attribute but also the highest reversal estimate, that is participant-13. When she is asked to comment about the interdisciplinary courses offered by her own EASPE program, she revealed her thoughts with the following words:

"Compared to other universities, my university handle the issue of curriculum from a more interdisciplinary point of view. Seeing that most of educational administration programs pay a special attention to interdisciplinary approach, then it is inevitable to talk about a 'paradigm shift' in our field as well. From my personal standpoint, I had improved myself in different fields before starting my doctorate education, so I believe that also my individual academic background has an influence on my interdisciplinary preferences."

Oplatka (2010) examined the academic background of EASPE professors and he found that many of those had grew up in a host of different disciplines and fields other than EASPE. As a natural consequence of that, Oplatka asserted many professors are teaching courses in his/her areas of study. Therefore, the views of participant-13 were in accordance with the general situation outside Turkey.

When author asked her to evaluate interdisciplinary course titles, participant-13 referred to the drawbacks of TQM courses.

"TQM course no longer carries its popularity. I have observed that neither school principals nor teachers were inclined to consider TQM as an important management principle. Most of them are

against the bureaucratic procedure, which was imposed on them compulsorily in the previous years. Nowadays, strategic planning course is more widespread than TQM. However, the way how the course should be outlined and taught needs special consideration”.

This answer was exactly consistent with this participant’s own reversal conjoint result. In addition to participant-13’s comments mentioned above, severe criticisms were also put forward by participant-4 . She took a harsh stance against the necessity of this course.

“I do not believe in TQM approach because it is rather hard to accomplish it in educational organizations. Besides, it is supported neither by the administrators nor by the educational authorities. Even Turkish Ministry of National Education (TMONE) stepped back from it. We need new orientations instead of TQM. For manufacturing industry, it is possible to verify the quality of any product. However, for educational organizations, assessing it is not as easy as it is in the industrial world. . So I do not find TQM approach applicable for educational organizations.”

Likewise, while reviewing interdisciplinary course group, participant-1 criticized TQM course title with some sarcastic words like “fashion breeze”. His review was similar to that of participant-4 and he emphasized the management gap emerging in manufacturing and educational organizations.

“My preference for TQM is considerably low due to the fact that it is like a fashion breeze, not long lasting. Moreover, I have some suspicion of to what extent TQM principles comply with school organizations since school organizations distinguish from manufacturing organizations by being human-oriented.”

Compared to other reversals subjects, participant-9 handled the matter from a different point of view by suggesting an overarching course content including TQM content.

“As one of the first Turkish scholars to pioneer TQM studies in education science, I consider TQM as important and I believe that its philosophy should penetrate in all educational organizations. However, it is not sensible to design a new course for every new approach. Instead of doing so, we can constitute one unique course like ‘contemporary management approach’ covering also TQM topics.”

On the other hand, participant-11 and participant-12 were not among reversal scholars and they supported TQM courses from a different view of point. Participant-11 emphasized the necessity of TQM in education and challenged the bureaucratic overarching structure rather than directly judging TQM approach.

“TQM was launched in schools as mandatory by TMONE and the information process was repressed by top-down, traditional structure. It was carried out, de jure but there was nothing new, de facto. In this sense, some people put blame on TQM approach instead of questioning the prevailing implementations. This philosophy helped Japan to reconstruct itself and we should not underestimate it. Just as you look back and recognize your past, you can gather the necessary data so as to plan the future. Yet ignorantly, some people keep on evaluating data collection and strategic planning as bureaucratic process and they put to blame on TQM understanding. If we can put it to good use, strategic planning facilitate the bottom-up management practice instead of existing top-down practice so that schools can improve their own plans with TQM.”

In a similar way to participant-11, participant-12 drew attention to effectiveness of TQM approach provided that schools and scholars could internalize the useful practices arising from it.

“TQM and school improvement are at the heart of education system because it provides schools with the accreditation components and standards. Above all, TQM approach is based on the process approach and I support it. Before TQM works, schools used to make a great effort to improve themselves in vain,

because trial and error method was pretty exhausting way to improve something. Thanks to TQM, schools get their counselors on the subject of school management and we educate those leaders in our master's programs. Thus, I believe TQM is a valuable course."

The underlying reasons of proponent and opponent views as to TQM courses was astonishingly related to concrete practices in education system. By common consent, they condemned the mistakes made in the name of TQM. While the proponents held the official executives responsible for the flaws, the opponents accused of the basic mindset of TQM.

4. CONCLUSION

Investigation of the compliance of academic course lists to academic members' preferences is subject to natural and scholarly risk to obtain indecisive findings. Since it can be postulated as self-evident that either academic institutions inherently design their curriculum according to present preferences of their academic members or academic members convey their knowledge to students through the design of new courses (Oplatka, 2010). Thus, conceivably, it was possible that present study might have become inconclusive, statistically yielding few reversals and low relative importance estimates through conjoint analysis. Nevertheless author deliberately did not dispense with questioning scholars' consent for existing course structures. To author's content, the study attained research goal by provoking a vigorous discussion about some course groups and titles to some extent. Along with diverse relative importance and partial utility estimates, consistent with the aim, the current study also ignited effective debate on statistics, total quality management and education law course titles.

Some scholars expressed that universities are in need of more qualified academicians, particularly in the field of statistics and curriculum. As a matter of course, it can be anticipated that the statistical procedures employed in educational administration research should have made a great strides from basic statistics to multivariate analyses. Bakioğlu and Kurnaz (2011) revealed that education science scholars ascribe the matter of research quality to methodological competencies and reliability-validity measures of the used research instruments. Yet, Karadağ (2010; 2011) argued that educational doctoral dissertations made in Turkish universities were far from fulfilling the statistical reliability and validity requirements, and what is more only 2.3 % of those employed multivariate and advanced level statistical analyses (Demirel et al., 2005). Additionally, Keskinçilic and Ertürk (2009) stated another striking issue that despite of having master's degree, PhD students are inadequately supplied with statistics. In the light of given literature on statistics courses, this study's results put ahead one controversial point that although some scholars are aware of the EASPE programs' deficiency of statistics courses, nevertheless they do not prefer advanced level statistics course for master's degree. It can be interpreted seeing that existing EASPE programs were evaluated not to be qualified enough to teach advanced level statistics to postgraduate students, so further advanced level course did not make sense on the ground of the given deficiency. Another possibility to think over is that the existing course and term lengths caused scholars to prefer more basic courses for master's degree and more advanced courses for PhD programs.

As for interdisciplinary field, the current research gave a rise to interrogate the function of TQM course in EASPE programs. Örucü and Şimşek (2011) recently addressed that the EASPE scholars mostly identified their field as an "interdisciplinary social science". So, not surprisingly, the result of this study revealed that the course titles in relation with interdisciplinary subject area reached a great relative importance (20.7%). However it was obvious in the study that academic members' preferences for interdisciplinary course titles varied widely. For instance, although "total quality management" was the most frequent course title placed in university syllabuses, conversely it was found to be the least valued

topic by scholars. On the other hand, “organizational learning” and “educational philosophy” course titles ranked as the most important interdisciplinary course titles despite of the fact that they have been offered in the limited number of universities. Thus, the current research raised a critical question concerned with the function of TQM course at EASPE syllabuses by suggesting a tough research agenda for the field.

Further examination brought up another striking result that a host of scholars reviewed TQM as a temporary fashion. According to their opinion, it is inevitable that TQM is to lose its influence on the field in a short while. Örüçü and Şimşek (2011) reached a similar result in their research that some scholars identified TQM by using the same term: “fashion”. In fact, the current study showed that the reviews on TQM are immensely diverse according to scholars’ educational management understandings, yet somewhat the same diversion leaves it open to criticism. While one scholar appreciated the data-driven management approach as a comprehensive decision making process in TQM, another one complained about bulks of non-functional documents which teachers are forced to fulfill in the name of TQM vainly. While one scholar describe higher education, referring to a catch-all term for all postgraduate education, as an innovative part of education industry in the international business marketing (Kanpinit, 2008), on the other hand, another condemns the central mindset of TQM for approaching educational organizations as profitable business companies (Çaralan, 2002). Now that educational quality is rather controversial concept in research and policy discussion (Cheng and Tam, 1997), it is no wonder to confront controversial considerations of scholars on TQM. As Foucault (1988) noted that the role of scholars is not to shape others’ will or mindset; it is to disturb others’ mental habits. In doing so, the current research partly carried out its task and provided some incentives for future studies with regard to other interdisciplinary courses in EASPE programs.

Though being overshadowed by the number of occurred-reversals in the interdisciplinary theme (n=9), in fact, the most significant factor affecting academic members’ preferences was found to be supervision course group. In view of historical background, it is attributable to professionalization period of educational administration in that the supervision concept was an overarching theme embracing a number of actual school management themes in its scope and purpose in the late 19th century (Berry and Beach, 2009). In the course of time, “supervision” term maintained its mainstream position in EASPE programs even so many others also came up such as leadership, diversity, planning, education economy etc. Author (2011) examined actual popularity of supervision theme through syllabuses of EASPE master’s programs and as a result of his research, it came second in the most popular courses list. Bates and Eacott (2008) examined the major EASPE themes by means of keywords observed in 362 journal articles and he found that supervision theme came fourth in frequency among 12 major themes (f=30). That is to say, not only academic members’ preferences, but also EASPE syllabuses and scholarly journals justifiably evidenced substantial contribution of supervision theme into EASPE programs. Besides, conjoint results showed that scholars are apt to consider supervision field as a contemporary counseling process more than a technical field requiring formal inspection practices and strict law reviews. Still, one scholar tackled “education law” as regards individual rights of educators. Another underlined far too extensive scope of this course to fit into master’s program and the need for specific “education law” program.

As a conclusion, conjoint analyses resulted some conflicts between academic members’ preference and existing course lists, which occurred mostly in interdisciplinary course group. Thus, interdisciplinary course group caused the most controversial debate particularly for TQM course title. Through interviews further investigation elicited that the debate in question was arising from a deeper disagreement over the consistency of TQM approach with educational organizations on theoretical and practical base. Yet, many participants were in agreement about the requirement for well-trained academic members in the

field of statistics. Besides, it was found that participants' view on EASPE courses varied from one to another according to their academic backgrounds, personal experiences, theoretical consideration and the universities in which they work.

4.1. Implications for Further Research

Despite research limitations mentioned before, nonetheless author believes that this study made a modest but peculiar contribution to research on EASPE course lists. Nonetheless, this study should be replicated with a greater number of academics from other universities. Future studies may consider comparing academics' course preferences according to their scholarly backgrounds or curriculum vita. Hopefully, the current research warrants further investigation of scholars' preferences for other course themes and titles not covered in this study.

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